

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



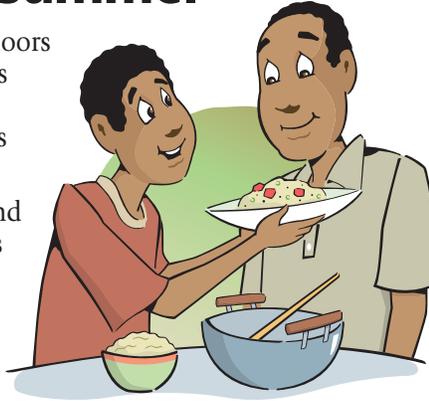
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Sharing new experiences leads to a learning-rich summer

Learning doesn't stop when the school doors close for the summer. Widen your child's horizons by exposing him to new and interesting places, experiences and events this summer. Here are some ideas:

- **Play tourist.** You don't have to spend lots of money or travel great distances to experience something unusual. Instead, be tourists in your own town or one nearby. Explore a trail at a local park. Check out the latest exhibit at a city's science center or art museum.
- **Appeal to his stomach.** Don't overlook one of the best tools for experiencing a new culture: food! If you can, find a great ethnic restaurant and enjoy a cuisine you've never tried before. Or whip up an ethnic dish together at home. Ask your child to search for intriguing recipes online or at the library.
- **Take in a show.** Has your middle schooler ever attended a play? Make this the summer he starts! Look for low-cost options. If live theater isn't available, head for the library or movie rental store instead. Find a movie version of a play. Afterward, discuss it with him.



Your child's summer learning experiences may make him eager to learn more once the school bell rings again this fall!



Maintain healthy habits this summer

Summer vacation shouldn't signal the end of healthful habits! To keep your child on the road to wellness during summer break:

- **Stick to a schedule.** Don't throw your child's alarm clock out the window just because it's vacation. You can push back her bedtime and waking time a little, but maintain a regular schedule.
- **Set limits on screen time.** Your child may have plenty of downtime during the summer, but it shouldn't be spent staring at a screen. Research shows that too much "couch potato" time may lead to obesity and other health problems.
- **Get your child moving!** Help her find an activity she loves—jogging, biking, skateboarding, etc. Involve the whole family! Exercise benefits everyone.
- **Eat dinner together.** Eating together may help her develop healthy attitudes about food, and it's also a terrific way to stay connected.

Source: "Top 10 Ways to Help Children Develop Healthy Habits," the American Heart Association, www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3033747.

Examples teach respect

Don't just tell your child about respect. Show her what it looks like. Be sure to:

- **Treat others** respectfully.
- **Be honest.** When you do something wrong, own up to it.
- **Be polite to her.** Don't save every *please* and *thank you* for company!

Fill the summer with words

According to research, kids may lose some of their "word smarts" if they don't keep reading over the summer. Make sure your child doesn't stop reading! To surround your child with words this summer:

- **Visit the library**—often!
- **Browse bookstores.** Let your child discover something fascinating.
- **Keep books handy.** What could be nicer than a cool drink and a cool book on a hot day?



Source: B. Miller, Ph.D., "The Learning Season: The Untapped Power of Summer to Advance Student Achievement," www.nmefdn.org/uploads/Learning_Season_FR.pdf.

Evaluate this school year

Consider doing a school-year review with your child as this academic year draws to a close. Together, discuss these questions:

- **Did** your child do as well as he had hoped?
- **What** was his favorite class and why?
- **What** was his least favorite and why?

Encourage your child to write down a list of goals for next school year. Knowing that you have high expectations—and that you believe in him—is great motivation for your child to reach his goals.





What can parents do to help worried middle schoolers?

Q: My daughter has just completed seventh grade and she's already worried about the teachers she'll get next year. Should I step in? Or should I stay out of it?

A: Part of growing up is learning how to deal with circumstances, no matter what they are. Allowing your child to deal with hers—including her “teacher circumstances”—may go a long way toward helping her mature.

First, ask your daughter why she is so worried. Is she just listening to rumors about “tough teachers”? Point out that not all rumors are true—and not all students are the same. A teacher who “everyone” considers a “homework-loving monster” might push her hard enough to reach her fullest potential.

If your daughter is worried because she has had a previous bad experience with a certain teacher, remind her that a new year is a new start. There are a number of things she can do to make a good impression. She can:

- **Greet the teacher** in the hall or when she walks into class.
- **Listen attentively** and look at the teacher as he speaks.
- **Sit up straight** in her desk and ask questions to show interest.
- **Come prepared** for class, with pens, books and other needed supplies.



Are you staying vigilant this summer?

Far fewer responsibilities, warm weather and long days often lead to a lot of “hanging out” for middle school children. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're appropriately supervising your child's social life:

1. **Do you know** your child's friends? Do you encourage him to invite new friends over so you can meet them?
2. **Do you have** contact information for the parents of your child's friends?
3. **Before you let** your child go out, do you make sure you know where he will be, whom he is with, what he'll be doing, and when he'll be home?
4. **Do you encourage** your child to participate in wholesome activities—swimming, day camps, volunteering?

5. **Are you aware** of your child's interests—for example, finding information about the new movie he wants to see to make sure it is appropriate?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you are keeping good track of your child this summer. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

“If we don't discipline ourselves, the world will do it for us.”

—William Feather

Good character starts with helping, thinking of others

Young children do what parents ask because they want to please or they want something in return. But now your child should be working on simply “doing the right thing.”

To encourage this:

- **Make** requests in terms of helping. “Can you help me by taking out the trash?”
- **Ask** him to consider others. “Do you think Mrs. Johnson would like her newspaper brought to her door?”

Source: Thomas Lickona, *Raising Good Children*, ISBN: 0-553-37429-X, Bantam.

Stand against drug abuse

Substance abuse is one topic that should not be open to negotiation with your child. To make your stance clear:

- **Be explicit.** “We will *never* allow underage drinking or illegal drug use.”
- **Say, “Don't do it.”** Do not say, “Be careful.” Do not condone “friends” who drink or use drugs.

Inspire your child to excel

Encourage your child to enter a contest this summer. Whether she enjoys writing, art, photography or math, the idea that your child is competing against peers and being judged may motivate her to produce her “personal best” work.

To find a contest, suggest that your child:

- **Check** with her teacher.
- **Ask** a librarian.
- **Look** on the Internet. Try searching “contests for middle school students 2011.”



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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

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